



## Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Pritzker Administration Awards 50 Business Interruption Grants for Businesses in Champaign-Urbana

*First Wave of Business Interruption Grants Released to 2,655 Small Businesses, Including More Than 50 Percent Minority-Owned and Businesses Hit Hardest by COVID-19*

**CHAMPAIGN URBANA**— Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today visited the Champaign-Urbana area to announce \$46 million in small business grants have been released to 2,655 small businesses throughout the state – with 50 grants totaling \$910,000 for businesses in the Champaign Urbana area. These grants represent the first round of the Business Interruption Grant (BIG) program – with grants provided to over 400 individual cities and spread across 78 counties. Grant recipients represent a diversity of businesses, as well as business communities hit hardest by COVID-19 related closures.

To ensure ongoing support for Illinois small businesses, the State of Illinois has planned future rounds of funding. BIG represents the largest state-run economic support program in response to the economic hardship caused by coronavirus.

“I’m proud to announce the first \$46 million of our \$636 million Business Interruption Grant program has been deployed to help nearly 2,700 small businesses in over 400 cities and towns in Illinois. That’s 78 of our 102 counties. The initial focus of these grants has been on businesses that have been most severely impacted by COVID-19 — those that were completely shut down during the pandemic and those that are in COVID-impacted areas that experienced property damage amidst the looting and civil unrest in June,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “Overall, the BIG program will offer at least \$270 million in grants to small businesses who have suffered losses due to the COVID pandemic, with a separate \$270 million set aside specifically for childcare providers – an essential underpinning of our workforce for countless working families. The federal PPP program seems to have overlooked too many entrepreneurs and small shops, and it was important to me and to the General Assembly to ensure that small businesses – which employ the largest number of people – get the help they need. That’s why we focused on the

smallest local businesses, with annual revenues of \$3 million or less in this initial round of funding.”

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, BIG is our latest tool in helping businesses with the support they need to maintain operations, support their staff and focus their efforts on a safe reopening in the wake of the crisis,” **said Acting Director of DCEO, Michael Negron.** “While the first round of BIG will provide a much-needed boost for thousands of businesses around the state, we know there is much more we must do. Through a number of programs launched in recent weeks, and with another round of BIG on the horizon, we will continue to respond to the needs facing our business community and work to provide assistance where it’s needed most.”

First round grants range from \$10,000-\$20,000 and may be used to help businesses with working capital expenses, including: payroll costs; rent; utilities; and equipment as well as other unexpected costs to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, such as PPE, training, and new technology. Business categories identified in the first round include small businesses in industries that continue to experience economic hardship due to public concerns for health and safety and in areas that sustained setbacks due to property damage and closures as a result of recent civil unrest.

BIG Round 1 grants span a diverse geography, as well as business type – with more than 50 percent of grant recipients reporting they are minority-owned. This breakdown includes 14 percent Black business owners, 25 percent Asian-owned, and 11 percent Latinx-owned. Additionally, more than 600 grants totaling \$10 million for downstate businesses. To ensure small businesses were given a priority, grantees were required to prove annual revenues of \$3 million or lower.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has placed an immense burden on businesses across our state, and right here in Champaign County,” **said Carly McCrory-McKay, Executive Director of the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation.** “We’re extremely grateful to Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for the creation of the Business Interruption Grants Program, supporting 50 small businesses in the Champaign-Urbana area in the first round. These funds will be crucial in helping businesses offset some of the negative impacts of the pandemic, especially the industries heavily restricted or completely shut down.”

From the Champaign-Urbana area, 50 businesses received BIG grants in the first round of funding. Businesses receiving grants include a wide range of industries, including restaurants, retail, personal care services and more. Portions of Champaign County lie within a severe DIA, including the area where both locations of the Wood N Hog BBQ restaurant sit.

"Growing up in the projects, life wasn't easy for my sister and I so we wanted to build something so that our future generations wouldn't experience the same struggle." **said Michael McDonald, co-owner of Wood N Hog BBQ in Champaign-Urbana.** "When COVID-19 hit, I didn't feel like I could depend on the banks to save me so I'm thankful to the State for seeing potential in our business, and for dedicating these funds that will allow us to get back to where we were before the crisis."

More than 5,000 businesses applied for funding, with grantees selected via random lottery. To ensure reviews were conducted with an objective, equitable lens and to maximize the turnaround time on application reviews, DCEO partnered with several community-based grant administration partners, including Accion, Chicago Urban League, Women's Business Development Center, The Chicago Community Loan Fund, Somercor and Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives.

"In the face of this pandemic, I am proud that over \$800,000 will be going to businesses across Urbana-Champaign due to the BIG program," **said State Representative Carol Ammons (D-Champaign)**. "Local businesses are the soul of our community and when this crisis hit, store and restaurant owners came up with creative solutions to safely stay open and serve their customers. So, when the General Assembly convened in May, I made a promise to my district that I would fight for bold COVID-19 response. This grant program is just that."

To give entrepreneurs of color who historically lack access to the same level of funding and opportunities as other business owners, DCEO is offering technical assistance to support businesses. This week, DCEO announced it will invest \$1 million to expand outreach capacity in future rounds by working with four community navigator partners - community-based organizations that will build a "hub and spoke" model to engage, train and invest in expanding capacity of smaller organizations to reach more business owners eligible for BIG assistance. These partners include: the Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, The Resurrection Project, the Chicago Urban League and the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation.

This first round of BIG grants will be followed by future rounds of the program, each offering consideration to business sectors facing the most extreme economic hardship as a result of COVID-19-related closures or diminished operating capacity. Separately, an additional \$270 million of the BIG program is set aside for childcare providers, with funding administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services. Childcare providers may apply for these funds until August 14<sup>th</sup> at [this link](#).

Illinois businesses can learn more about BIG future rounds by following DCEO on social media @IllinoisDCEO or visiting their website at [Illinois.gov/DCEO](https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo). A full list of round 1 business grant recipients is available on DCEO's website at:

[https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/SmallBizAssistance/Documents/BIG-Round1Awardees\\_08.12.20.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/SmallBizAssistance/Documents/BIG-Round1Awardees_08.12.20.pdf)

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